

A303

Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme

Public consultation



Welcome

A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling Scheme

Background

The A303/A358 corridor provides vital east-west connectivity between the south west and London and the south east for people, communities and businesses, including the tourist industry which is so important to the south west. However, there are problems along the route.

These include several single carriageway sections where road users can suffer congestion and long delays. The problems are even worse at peak holiday times during the summer months and on weekends.

In recognition of this and the harmful effects this has on the south west's economy, the Government's *Road Investment Strategy* (RIS) sets out the intention to transform connectivity by upgrading the A303/A358 corridor to a high quality dual carriageway from the M3 motorway to the M5 motorway at Taunton.

To support this, we are developing 3 major road improvement schemes along the A303/A358 corridor:

- A358 Taunton to Southfields
- A303 Sparkford to Ilchester
- A303 Stonehenge: Amesbury to Berwick Down



A303/A358 route corridor schemes

1. A358 Taunton to Southfields
2. A303 Sparkford to Ilchester
3. A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down

Why we need the scheme

The section of the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester comprises of a mix of dual and single lane carriageway, which leads to localised congestion, impacting adversely on journey times and journey time reliability.

Currently, on a normal day, up to 23,500 vehicles use this single carriageway section. At weekends in the summer the number of vehicles using this section of road can increase by nearly half as many again. This is more traffic than the road is designed to carry.

Due to the increase in traffic, average travel times can double on the westbound direction on a Friday in August, making it impossible to predict the time a journey will take.

This traffic is forecast to further increase as local authorities along the length of the corridor seek to deliver economic growth and new development.

This scheme will have significant benefits for the local area including:

- **Capacity:** the proposal will reduce congestion, by increasing the road's capacity for free-flowing traffic and making mile-a-minute travel the norm
- **Safety:** the proposal will boost road safety and ease driver stress. It will also make it safer and easier for cars, pedestrians and other local road users to reach facilities
- **Resilience:** there will be fewer road closures due to incidents or accidents
- **Economic growth:** by making trips quicker and safer, and arrival times easier to predict the proposal will by making the south west more attractive for tourists and commerce. Increasing the capacity of the road will also support the predicted growth in jobs and housing

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Looking at the options

During our previous consultation, we asked for your views on 2 shortlisted options for improving the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester:

- **Option 1:** A dual carriageway that follows the existing A303 from east of Podimore Roundabout to Downhead. At this point, the road moves north before reverting to follow the route of the existing A303 in the direction of Hazlegrove.
- **Option 2:** A dual carriageway that starts east of Podimore Roundabout before leaving the existing A303 to pass south of Annis Hill and then north of Steart Hill. It re-joins the existing A303 near Sparkford. The single carriageway section of the existing A303 would be retained as a local route.

We considered a number of factors in deciding between the options, including:

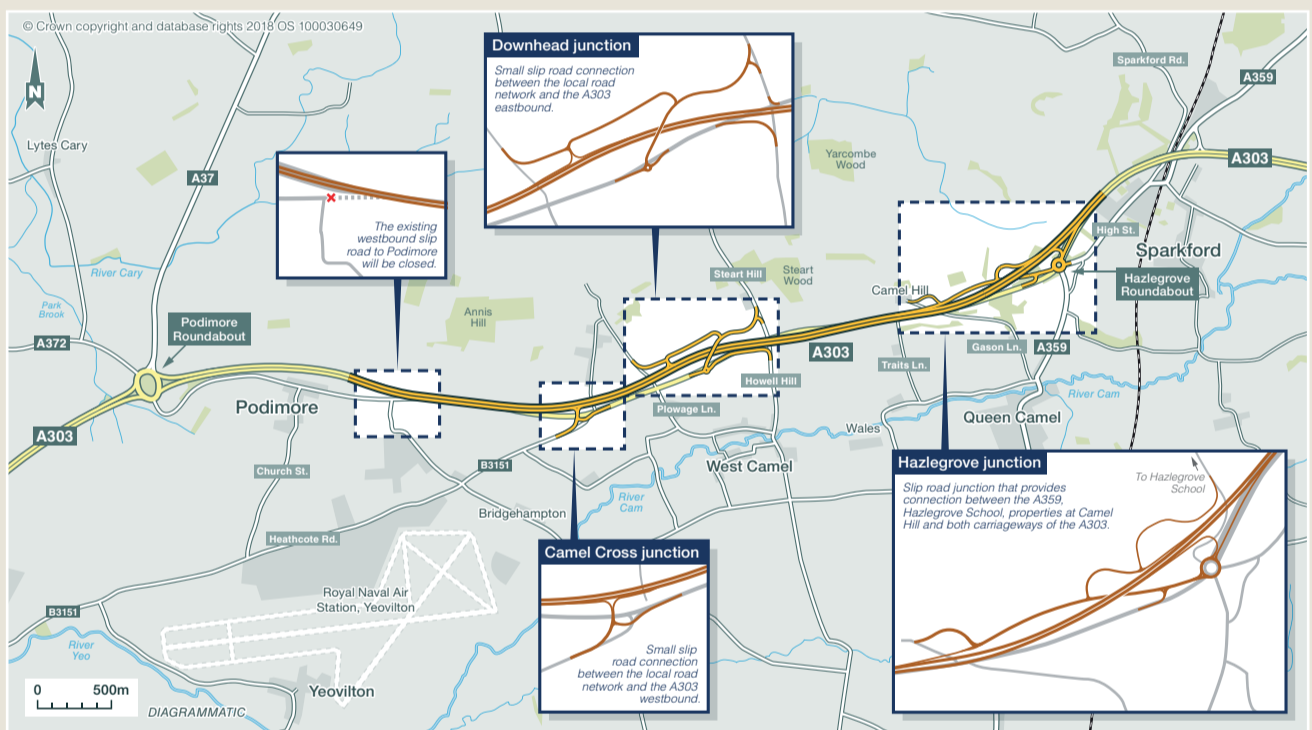
- Scheme objectives
- Safety
- Benefits
- Public consultation feedback
- Costs
- Environmental effects
- Construction

We selected Option 1 as our preferred route judged against the factors outlined above.

Scheme proposal

Since announcing the preferred route, we have continued to develop the scheme proposal.

The plan below shows the proposed dual carriageway and local access connections.



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Hazlegrove junction

We are proposing a new junction, built on 2 levels, at Hazlegrove. This would provide connections to Hazlegrove House, the A359, Camel Hill and access to villages south of the route. Our proposals for this junction take into account the significant amount of feedback we received on its design during the previous consultation.



Computer render of the redesigned junction after 15 years of planting growth.

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Downhead Lane junction

Following feedback from the previous consultation, we have considered a number of different options for a junction at Downhead, including:

- an all-movements junction allowing people to travel in any direction
- a limited movement junction, which might be smaller but would only allow road users to travel in certain directions
- no junction at all

Below is the proposed arrangement for a junction in the vicinity of Downhead Lane. The all movements junction, built across 2 levels, allows vehicles to join and leave the A303 in all directions.



Computer render of the redesigned junction after 15 years of planting growth.

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Caring for the environment

Understanding the impact on the environment and the community within the A303 corridor is very important to us. Our aim is to reduce any adverse effects while capturing the wider opportunities for improvement created by this scheme.

The area surrounding the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester has a number of sensitive and valued environmental sites, as well as a number of dwellings and farm businesses. We have prepared a Preliminary Environmental Information (PEI) Report to help local people understand the potential environmental effects of our proposal. This is available on our website at www.highways.gov.uk/Sparkford-to-Ilchester.

Following this consultation, we will prepare an Environmental Statement setting out in full our assessment of the potential effects of the scheme on the environment, and our proposed mitigation and enhancement measures. We will also produce a Construction Environmental Management Plan of how the mitigation and enhancement measures will be incorporated into our construction stage. We will submit these as part of our Development Consent Order application.

More information about the potential environmental impact is available on page 17 of the consultation booklet.



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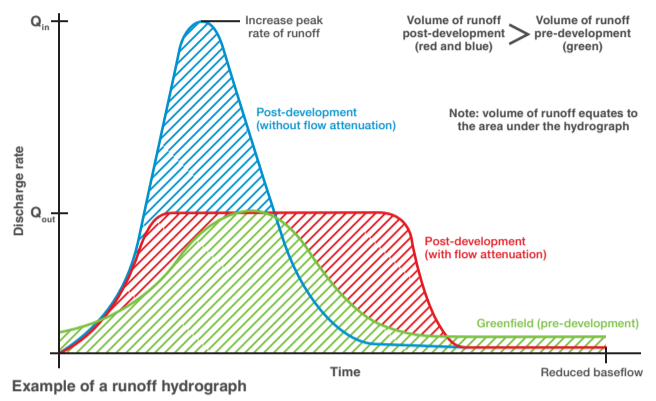
Highway drainage management

When rain falls on a natural landscape it soaks into the ground, evaporates, is taken up by plants (evapotranspiration) or some eventually finds its way into streams and rivers. This is often referred to as the Greenfield response.

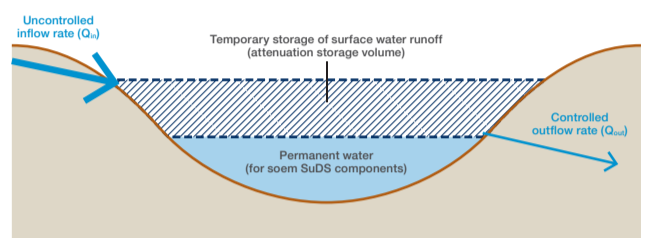
These stages of the water cycle can be impeded when land is altered by development. When rain falls on hard surfaces such as roads much more of it turns into surface water runoff, which can cause flooding, pollution and erosion problems.

To mitigate this, the highway drainage network will introduce Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to mimic the pre-developed Greenfield response to rainfall.

A study has found that the majority of the existing A303 carriageway between Sparkford and Ilchester does not include SuDS features. As we plan to introduce these features where previously there were none, this will not only mitigate any impact from the development but should improve the current situation.



Example of a runoff hydrograph

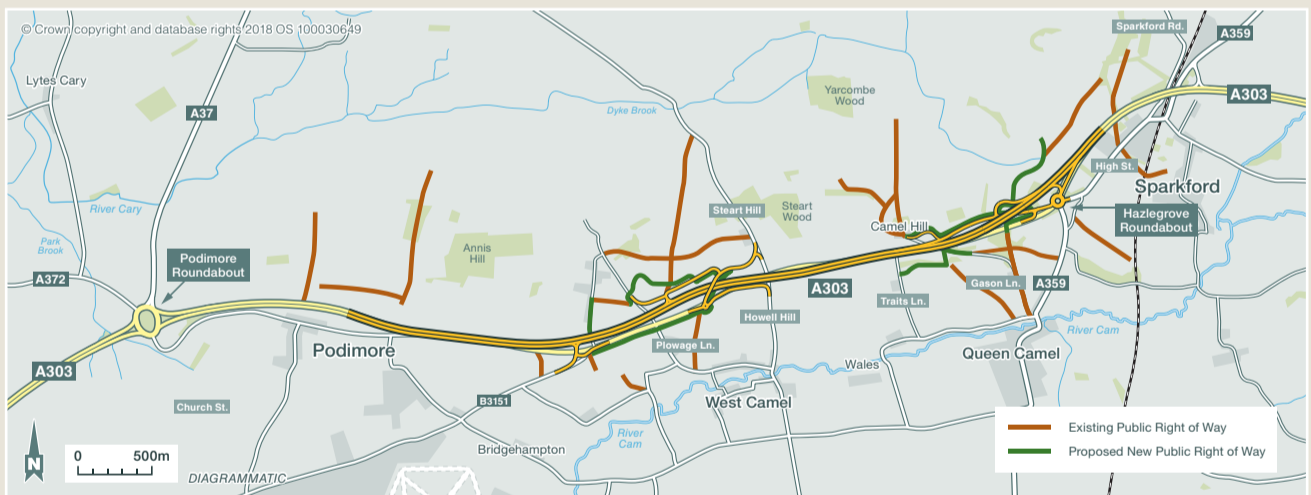


Controlling runoff rates using attenuation storage

Provision for non-motorised users

We need to ensure that the design of the scheme allows people travelling on foot, bicycle or by horse to continue to get around the area. We have carried out surveys to identify the most frequently used walking, cycling and riding routes which would be affected by the proposals. As part of this, we have considered how people with disabilities currently get around the area. We have also engaged with a number of user groups to ensure we fully understand what is important to them and those that they represent.

Based on this, we have developed proposals for crossing points which use overbridges and underbridges to enable people to cross the road more safely than they do at present. For safety reasons, at no point will non-motorised users be able to cross directly on the dual carriageway.



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Construction

We understand that local people will want to know the likely impact that constructing the scheme will have on their daily life, particularly in relation to traffic rat-running through local villages. A traffic management plan will be drawn up once the scheme proposals are finalised, together with a construction phase plan, detailing exactly how the works will be undertaken and how A303 and local traffic will be managed. In addition, we have appointed a specialist consultant to advise on how the scheme would be constructed and they have already attended site to understand some of the local constraints first hand.

Community and environmental impacts will be taken fully into account at all stages of the development, planning and decision-making process. That means working closely with local communities, local authorities, environmental bodies and major employers as work progresses in continuing the development of the scheme into the construction phase.

If development consent for the proposed scheme is granted, construction of the main works would be expected to commence in spring 2020 and continue for a period of approximately 2.5 years.



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Tell us your views

This is the second stage of our consultation process and we would like to know what you think about our proposed scheme.

We will listen to your views and publish a consultation report which summarises your feedback and how it will be considered to inform the final design stage.

To help us with this, please complete a questionnaire which you can access online at our website www.highways.gov.uk/Sparkford-to-Ilchester

Paper copies of the questionnaire are available at this event, at public information points and can be requested from the project team by:

- Emailing: A303SparkfordtoIlchesterdualling@highwaysengland.co.uk
- Calling us on: **0300 123 5000**
- Writing to us at: **A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Project Team, Highways England, 2/07K Temple Quay House, 2 The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6HA**

Next steps

The consultation is your opportunity to give your views on our proposal. If you have further questions or would like to find out more, speak to a member of the project team here at the exhibition event, or visit our website.

The public consultation will run from Friday 26 January until 23.59 on Friday 9 March 2018 (inclusive). Please get involved and provide your responses by the closing date.

We will analyse your feedback, consider all suggestions made, and respond to it in the report we prepare on the consultation. Your views will help the Secretary of State for Transport make a decision on our application.

The Development Consent Order application process

This scheme is classified as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008. Because of its national significance, the scheme needs a Development Consent Order or DCO.

Following this public consultation, we will carefully consider all comments received before submitting our DCO application.

If the application is accepted by the Planning Inspectorate, there will then be an examination of the application in which the public can participate. This examination will take a maximum of 6 months. The Planning Inspectorate then has 3 months to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State, who then has a further 3 months to make a final decision.

